



Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs

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Providing leadership and advocacy for the enhancement of our fish and wildlife resources for the benefit of all hunters, trappers, anglers and conservationists. Protecting our 2nd Amendment Rights.

Pennsylvania House of Representatives Game and Fisheries Committee

House Bill 231 – Antlerless License Issuance

May 12, 2015

Good morning Chairmen Gillespie, Chairman Harhai, members of the House Game & Fisheries Committee. My name is John Kline. I am the Director of Government Affairs for the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs (PFSC). On behalf of the officers, individual members, member clubs and member organizations of the Federation, we thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 231, regarding the issuance for antlerless deer licenses.

Since its inception in 1932, the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs' mission is to provide a statewide, united voice for the concerns of all sportsmen and conservationists; to insure their rights and interests are protected, and to protect and enhance the environment and our natural resources.

The Federation is a true grass roots organization, representing approximately 70,000 women and men that come from diverse backgrounds and hail from virtually all areas of the Commonwealth.

In March of this year, the Federation held its annual spring convention in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. Delegates and officers of the organization gathered to discuss a wide variety of issues concerning hunting, fishing, trapping and other conservation related topics. Part of the annual convention process is to address and vote on current matters that affect our members and their outdoor interests. The results of these votes become the Federation's formal position on whatever matter is addressed, whether its legislation, regulation or any position related to our outdoor pursuits. Voting is carried out by individual delegates representing our member clubs, individual members and other member organizations that have a seat at the table.

One of the topics discussed and voted on in March was House Bill 231. After a lengthy discussion, a vote to support House Bill 231 was adopted. This is not the first time PFSC has supported removing the county treasurers from the antlerless license issuance process. The Federation has been on record in support of returning this process to the PGC since the PAL's system and Wildlife Management Units were first implemented.

Generally, the Federation views the sole responsibility of the licensing process as that of the Game Commission. As most of us who have hunted in Pennsylvania for years recall, the commonwealth was once separated into geographic boundaries by county. Allocation of antlerless licenses was the responsibility of the Game Commission, and distribution of these licenses was the responsibility of the county treasurers. This approach had some logic when the issuance of all licenses had to be "hand processed" and the antlerless tags were issued on a county-wide basis. Hunters submitted their requests to the county they wanted to hunt in.

When the Game Commission introduced the Wildlife Management Unit system or WMU's, hunters were permitted to hunt for antlerless deer in larger areas not bound by county lines. The County Treasurers, however, were still involved in the license issuing process because of the legislative mandate.

Upon introduction of the Pennsylvania Automated Licensing System (PALS), both the Game and Fish and Boat Commissions took a huge step towards modernizing the license issuing process. Even though antlerless deer license allocations had no county boundaries whatsoever, the county treasurers were, and still are, responsible for issuance of these licenses because it is still legislatively mandated.

This current process is antiquated. Adoption of House Bill 231 would save the Game Commission time and money, and would relieve the county treasurers of the burden of the antlerless issuance process. There have been many stories of issuing problems with the current process. The Federation believes that housing the entire process under the resource agency's PAL's system is appropriate, will streamline the process and makes good common sense.

The Federation views House Bill 231 as a logical and frankly, past due change to improve and fully utilize the capabilities of a computerized "point of sale" licensing system that works well and has been a useful tool for the agencies, and a convenience for hunters, who should be able to purchase their antlerless licenses the same way and at the same time they purchase their other licenses. With today's electronic technology, the question is, what are we waiting for?

With the PAL's system, county treasurers who still want to issue licenses, can still do so, the same way all authorized license vendors issue licenses. This will make the process much more efficient and convenient in the long haul.

On behalf of the Federation and our members, we hope you will support this legislation and help move it through the legislative process.

Thank you for this opportunity to present our views, and I stand ready for any questions.